

NOMINATIONS OF CLAUDE M. (“MICK”) KICKLIGHTER, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POLICY AND PLANNING, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND JOHN A. GAUSS, PH.D., TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY, AND CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS’ AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

AUGUST 2, 2001

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C O N T E N T S

AUGUST 2, 2001

SENATORS

	Page
Rockefeller, Hon. John D. IV, U.S. Senator from West Virginia, prepared statement	2
Specter, Hon. Arlen, U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania, prepared statement	3

WITNESSES

Gauss, John A., Ph.D, to be Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology, and Chief Information Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs	12
Prepared statement	13
Questionnaire for Presidential nominees	14
Response to written questions submitted by:	
Hon. Ben Nighthorse Campbell	15
Hon. Tim Hutchinson	16
Kicklighter, Claude M. ("Mick"), to be Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning, Department of Veterans Affairs	6
Prepared statement	8
Questionnaire for Presidential nominees	9

APPENDIX

Campbell, Hon. Ben Nighthorse, U.S. Senator from Colorado, prepared statement	23
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RETARY FOR POLICY AND PLANNING, DE-
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NOLOGY, AND CHIEF INFORMATION OFFI-
CER, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

THURSDAY, AUGUST 2, 2001

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m., in room SR-418, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. John D. Rockefeller IV (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Rockefeller, Akaka, Wellstone, Murray, Miller, Nelson, Specter, Thurmond and Hutchison.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. This hearing will come to order. Senator, I understand you have some family here.

Senator MILLER. Yes. How did you know that? They are Braves fans, too.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Are they?

Senator MILLER. Like you.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Like me? Well, maybe we just ought to introduce them here right off the bat.

Senator MILLER. Well, my wife is here and my two grandsons.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Can they stand?

Senator MILLER. This is the last committee meeting I will ever get them to go to.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Are all three of you Braves fans?

Senator MILLER. Very much so.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. I am now sufficiently emotionally happy that I can proceed with this hearing. The hearing will come to order, and we have, obviously, the last—is it 2 days or 2 weeks—of our session? Whatever it is, we have a lot to do, so I am going to be brief in my remarks. We are going to consider the nominations of John Gauss to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Information and Technology, and Mick Kicklighter, who is to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Policy and Planning. Those are both very complicated positions.

Dr. Gauss, John, I extend a warm welcome to you and to your wife, Charlotte, if she is here. We are happy to have you. Computer technology within the VA, I suspect, is going to be something of a change from what you have been doing. Space and Naval Warfare Command in San Diego, and VA computer technology and IT, are not probably at the same level, but this is a hugely important time for that technology and therefore I am very glad that you are here.

We have been criticized in the VA for the failure to protect financial and medical records. That is a subject that interests me beyond the scope of this committee. And we have been criticized for the delays in processing claims, which has to do, obviously, with technology. Some people have said that what we do makes the situation worse, rather than better. So, assuming that you will be confirmed, which I hope you will be, we will be looking upon you as a genuine architect, with very large responsibilities and enormous consequences for veterans everywhere in this country. A seamless set of processes is easy to say. I suspect you have done that, but I suspect it will be more difficult in our situation. So that is what I would say to you for the moment.

Mick, you are, of course, no stranger to the VA, and I welcome you and your family, and I understand your wife Betty, your daughter Jane, and two grandchildren, Matthew and Richard, are here. Where are they?

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. Right here.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. You guys do not even have to be Braves fans. I understand also that you have a friend named Tom Donnelly who is here, and where is he? OK, Tom.

Is Senator Akaka here? Senator Akaka is here, and he is going to introduce you. But before any of this starts, I have to note that both of the nominees have completed their committee questionnaire for Presidential nominees, which will appear in the hearing record; also included will be letters from the Office of Government Ethics, acknowledging that each is in compliance with laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest, and I have reviewed the FBI reports. I am sure the ranking member has too, and we find no bar to either nominee's confirmation.

[The prepared statement of Senator Rockefeller follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER IV, U.S. SENATOR FROM
WEST VIRGINIA

Good afternoon. We have a very busy agenda today, with a confirmation hearing followed immediately by a meeting on pending legislation, so I will be brief in my remarks.

We meet first today to consider the nominations of John Gauss to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Information and Technology, and Mick Kicklighter to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Policy and Planning.

Dr. Gauss—John—I extend a warm welcome to you, and to your wife Charlotte. Computer technology within VA might not evolve at the same blistering pace that you confronted at the Space and Naval Warfare Command in San Diego, but this is a critical time for VA's information systems. VA has been criticized for its failure to protect private health and financial records, and for the delays in processing benefits claims that have been exacerbated, rather than eliminated, by new technology. Assuming that you are confirmed, we will look to you as the architect of a new VA information system—a seamless set of processes that will be able to grow and adapt to new needs and new technology. This will be a demanding and, perhaps, frustrating task, but one that is necessary if we are to meet the expectations in the slogan "One VA."

Mick, you are, of course, no stranger to VA. I welcome you and your family, including your wife Betty, your daughter, Jane, and two grandchildren, Matthew and Richard. I understand that you also have a friend, Tom Donnelly, here with you today. My friend and colleague Senator Akaka is here to introduce you formally. I'm looking forward to hearing about how the Policy and Planning office can help VA's various offices develop a cohesive strategy to meet veterans' changing needs.

I note that John and Mick have completed the Committee Questionnaire for Presidential Nominees, which will appear in the hearing record. Also included will be letters from the Office of Government Ethics acknowledging that each is in compliance with laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest. I have reviewed their FBI reports and find no bar to either nominee's confirmation.

Now, I look forward to hearing from both of our nominees.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Now, before I let Senator Akaka make the introduction, I need to get you to stand, each of you, and raise your right hand so I can give you the oath. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you will give in this hearing, and any written answers or statements that you provide in connection with this hearing, will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. I do, sir.

Mr. GAUSS. Yes, sir.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Please be seated.

Senator Specter, did you have anything you wanted to say before I turn it over to Senator Akaka?

Senator SPECTER. Mr. Chairman, I just commend you for scheduling this hearing. I know that we have the nominations and are hopeful that we will be able to move promptly to give the Secretary the people he needs. We have very important substantive issues before us. In light of the heavy workload of the committee and what we have to do this afternoon, I will put the balance of my statement in the record.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. I will do it both——

Senator SPECTER. Just do not forget, tomorrow we are supposed to start a recess. [Laughter.]

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. So we will come back with batteries fully charged and verbiage in appropriate sequence, I hope.

[The prepared statement of Senator Specter follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ARLEN SPECTER, U.S. SENATOR FROM PENNSYLVANIA

Good afternoon. We have a lot of business to accomplish this afternoon—and we have a limited amount of time in which to accomplish this business. Therefore, I will be brief.

Our purpose today is two-fold: to consider two nominations by, first, receiving testimony from them and then—the Chairman and I hope—voting to approve their nominations. Second, we meet today to markup and approve an extensive legislative agenda.

I know the Chairman will summarize the legislation we will consider today in some detail. I will not, therefore, attempt to do that. I just take a moment to note one measure of particular importance to me: proposed increases in Montgomery GI Bill benefits.

As the Committee's members know, I worked hard while I was Chairman to secure increases in Montgomery GI Bill benefits. With the help of now-Chairman Rockefeller and the Committee's members, we achieved some level of success; MGIB benefits went from \$427 a month to the current level of up to \$800—an increase of 87% during the four years I chaired the Committee.

I am pleased that we continue to press ahead on this issue. And while the full complement of increases contained in the bill (S. 1114) I introduced on June 27, 2001 are not possible due to budgetary constraints, the provisions contained in the Chairman's mark take us two-thirds of the way there. I thank the Chairman for

including these provisions—and for sharing my sense that Montgomery GI Bill increases are a first-priority item on this Committee's agenda.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Mick, both Senator Akaka and Senator Thurmond want to present you.

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. Thank you, sir.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. So, if Senator Akaka would defer, which I am sure he will, to the senior position of Senator Thurmond, Senator Thurmond, we would be delighted to have you make that introduction, sir, to introduce Mr. Kicklighter.

Senator THURMOND. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to be here today to welcome our nominees, Admiral Gauss and General Kicklighter. I am delighted to have the privilege of introducing to the committee Mr. Claude M. "Mick" Kicklighter, who has been nominated to serve in the Department of Veterans Affairs as an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Policy and Planning. This committee needs no introduction to General Kicklighter. He is known to the Senate, having been nominated for important positions within the U.S. Army, where he retired in 1991 with the rank of Lieutenant General. Members will also recall the magnificent job he did as director of the Department of Defense committee to commemorate the 50th anniversary of World War II.

Later, as Deputy Under Secretary of the Army for International Affairs, General Kicklighter organized the committee to carry out the Korean War 50th Anniversary Commemoration.

General Kicklighter is well-qualified to serve in this important position. As a retired officer, he is keenly aware of the needs of his fellow veterans. His professional experience, his work with veterans organizations, and his service in other non-profit foundations are a statement of his concern and his willingness to continue to serve his Nation and fellow citizens.

Furthermore, he is no stranger to the Department of Veterans Affairs. General Kicklighter previously served in the Department—first as Deputy Under Secretary of Memorial Affairs, later heading the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs.

I congratulate General Kicklighter on this nomination and fully endorse him. I have known and worked with him for many years. I can personally vouch for his integrity and ability. I look forward to working with these nominees as they serve the veterans of our Nation. I thank them for their appearance today and look forward to their testimony and prompt confirmation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Thank you, Senator Thurmond.

Senator Akaka?

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I feel it a great honor to come before the committee and thank you for this hearing, and I would say something about my long-time friend. So it is a pleasure for me to present Claude Kicklighter to the committee for confirmation as Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning. I would also like to welcome Betty—Betty, it is good to see you here—to today's confirmation hearing, and your daughter Jane and grandsons Matthew and Richard, also here to support their grandfather.

I first met Mick Kicklighter in 1984, when he was in the U.S. Army and stationed in Hawaii, and those were memorable days,

because we were very close. We got to know his family and he got to know mine, and we were able to meet on many occasions because he worked very well with the community. Based on the many years I have known Mick, I have every confidence in his ability to be an effective Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning at the Department of Veterans Affairs, and I fully support his confirmation.

Mick has been the Acting Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for the VA since January 24, 2001. He also serves as Director of Special Events in that office, a position to which he was assigned on October 22, 2000. Mick first joined VA as Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Activities on April 7, 2000. Mick also served our Nation for many years in the U.S. Army. Mick developed his leadership skills, decisionmaking abilities, and sound judgment during his years in the military when he commanded at every level, from company through division.

Mick returned to Hawaii in 1989, when he was assigned to command the U.S. Army-Pacific in 1989 to 1991. In July, 1991, he was designated as director of our Nation's effort to honor our World War II veterans during commemorations of the 50th anniversary of World War II, and that was a tremendous success because of Mick. It was a national holiday in Hawaii and across our country, and he did a tremendous job on that.

From September, 1995 to July, 1999, Mick served as Deputy Under Secretary for the Army for International Affairs. Mick's extensive experience with and knowledge of veterans and military matters clearly indicate that he is an excellent choice to be Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning at the Department of Veterans Affairs. As such, I am pleased to lend my support to Mick Kicklighter's confirmation and I urge the committee to act favorably on his nomination.

I would also like to mention that I had the opportunity last week to meet with Dr. John Gauss, who has been nominated to be Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology at the Department of Veterans Affairs. His accomplishments through his career reflect his qualification for this position. As such, I support Dr. John Gauss' nomination to be Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for holding this hearing and ask you to move these nominations as fast as we can through committee and to the floor of the Senate. Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Thank you, Senator Akaka. Senator Zell Miller also wants to say a word.

Senator MILLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I, too, appreciate your commitment to moving these nominations forward, and I would like to convey my support for both these very fine nominees present here today. But I felt like I had to point this out and say a few words about it. There is no doubt that Mick Kicklighter is eminently qualified for this position and comes highly recommended by so many people who have worked with him. I just do not want it to be overlooked that this is a man who was born and raised in Glennville, GA, and who is a graduate of Mercer University in Macon. That also should make him highly qualified.

Also, I must say this. Last week, one of Georgia's greatest warriors, one of this Nation's greatest warriors, came by to see me, Retired Marine General Raymond Davis, and he was wanting to make sure that this nominee was confirmed, and he wanted me to do my small part, and when General Davis speaks to me, General Kicklighter, I salute and try to do what he says. So welcome here today.

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. So do I, sir.

Senator AKAKA. Mr. Chairman, may I excuse myself? I am chairing another committee, on readiness. So thank you for this opportunity to be here.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Thank you, Senator Akaka. Are there any other comments?

Senator NELSON?

Senator NELSON. Well, first of all, I want to thank both of the nominees for being here today and to, as others have, welcome the families. It is clear that you are both eminently qualified for the positions for which you have been nominated, and I look forward to your testimony for these two vital positions, and am very anxious to see us move on your nominations so that we can give the Secretary the assistance that he needs in these important areas.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Mick, I have pointed out to the Senator from Georgia that my son's wife's mother was born in Milledgeville, GA. Do you suppose that will help me with Senator Miller?

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. I do. Yes, sir.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. It should, don't you think?

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. Yes, sir. I do.

Senator MILLER. It would help you even more to get General Raymond Davis to support you. [Laughter.]

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Please, gentlemen, proceed, whichever you prefer first. Why don't you go ahead, sir?

STATEMENT OF CLAUDE M. ("MICK") KICKLIGHTER, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POLICY AND PLANNING, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, it is truly an honor and a privilege for me to appear before you today. I would like to begin by thanking Senator Thurmond and Senator Akaka and Senator Miller for their very strong endorsement. I have known all three of these men for many, many years, and they have been an inspiration to me and many millions of other Americans.

Senator Akaka and Senator Thurmond are World War II veterans, and we know what a great generation that is. I also appreciate very much Senator Miller's very kind letter he sent to the chairman on my behalf, as well. Thank you, Senator Miller.

I am deeply honored that President Bush would nominate me to become the Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning in the Department of Veterans Affairs. I feel, with 36 years of continuous service in the U.S. Army and 9 years as a civil servant, I feel qualified, and look forward to continue to serve this great Nation in this position.

This committee knows better than I do the challenges that face the Department of Veterans Affairs in the future and this next century. We all know that we must make major reductions in the time it takes to process claims. We know that we must provide a world-class health care system that goes across our Nation, and our veterans must have timely access to that system. Especially now, when we are losing so many of the greater generation, we must make sure that we have national cemeteries and State military cemeteries all across our land to provide for the burial needs of our veterans. These cemeteries must and should be maintained in a manner that they are a memorial to their service and sacrifice to our Nation.

I would like to share with you, if I am confirmed, the priorities that I would pursue as the Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning. First, I would work very hard to make a good strategic plan even better and provide a road map for the Department of Veterans Affairs that unifies us so that we can provide the kind of support to our veterans and their families that they have a right to expect. The right kind of goals and objectives will help us to be better stewards of the resources that you have entrusted to us, to provide that support.

Second, I would welcome the opportunity to help the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary in developing the policies that we need to lead us into this next century. I know that the Secretary is the one who approves policy, but I think policy and planning has a responsibility for managing the process so that we move quickly and make adjustments. We also must analyze the policy, so that we are putting the right kind of policy in place that will provide the results to the veterans that are needed.

The next priority would be working hand-in-glove with the Inspector General to evaluate how well VA programs are functioning and supporting our veterans. The Inspector General will primarily look at waste, fraud, and abuse and how well the system works. It would be our job to look at the programs to see how well we are delivering services to veterans that were intended to be delivered and how well we are following congressional intent.

I would work very hard to ensure that we have a data base that is timely, accurate, and accessible, and that information would not only support this committee in its deliberations, but would support our planners and our decisionmakers. And then finally, we would look throughout our Nation, both in industry, in academia, and other government agencies, to look for the best management practices that should be adopted in VA.

One of the things that we are doing is embracing the Baldrige criteria. We made some progress, but we need to make more progress to get the Baldrige criteria adopted throughout VA. We do benchmarking and look for best practices that we could bring into the VA on a more rapid basis and institutionalize those things that we feel would help us be better stewards and provide better support.

I guess, Mr. Chairman, if I bring anything to this job, it is the fact that throughout my career I have been a team player and a team builder, and I would like to help the Secretary and the Deputy build a strong VA team, starting with building a strong team

within policy and planning. That team would have strong relations and strong bonds with our board of directors, the Congress, with the other government agencies, Defense and Labor. Also, it would have strong bonds with the veterans service organizations and the veterans offices in all the States across the Nation.

Sir, as you have heard, it was my great honor to have been selected in 1991 to help our Nation thank and honor the World War II veterans, their families, and those who served on the home front, and especially the families who lost loved ones in that war. If I learned anything out of that four-and-a-half year journey, it is how much we truly owe those veterans. Those men and women came home from that war, they said very little. They took off their uniforms, some went to school on the GI bill, but together they built this great, strong, beautiful, and free America that we are privileged to wake up in every morning. It has been said that any nation that forgets its veterans soon ceases to be a great nation, and I hope you will honor me with the opportunity to help our Nation to continue to show our veterans that we will never forget their service.

Sir, in closing, I would like to thank my wife of 47 years and my family, who have provided tremendous support to me in our journey, in our service to our country. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for the honor of appearing before this committee.

[The prepared statement and biographical information of Mr. Kicklighter follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CLAUDE M. ("MICK") KICKLIGHTER, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POLICY AND PLANNING, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the privilege and honor to appear before you today.

I am deeply honored by the confidence President Bush has shown in nominating me to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

With almost thirty-six (36) years of continuous active duty, serving in the U.S. Army, followed by nine (9) years as a civil servant, I believe I have the background and experience necessary to perform the duties required of this position.

As you well know, there are many important challenges and opportunities in this new century for the Department of Veterans Affairs. We must shorten the time it takes to process claims, and improve the quality of health care while delivering it in a more timely and accessible manner. We must also ensure that we have a veteran's cemetery in close proximity to veterans. These cemeteries must be a fitting memorial to our Veteran's service and sacrifice to our Nation.

If confirmed, one of my top priorities will be to assist the Secretary and Deputy Secretary in implementing the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. This will include making a good Strategic Plan even better. The VA Strategic Plan defines the priorities and future direction of our department. It clearly states the expected goals and outcomes of our programs and defines the measures we will use to assess our progress and accomplishments. The VA Strategic Plan is an integration of the plans of the Veterans Health, Benefits, and National Cemetery administrations, and is an executable road map to the future. It unites, coordinates, and integrates our efforts to provide the most professional and timely health care and benefits to Veterans and their families. The goals and objectives derived from the Strategic Plan will also help ensure that we are better stewards of the resources entrusted to us.

A second priority will be to analyze existing policies and recommend to the Secretary changes that would improve the delivery of health care, benefits, and services to Veterans. Also to assist the Secretary in the development of new policies that would improve our ability to take better care of our Nation's Veterans, within the resources available.

The third priority will be to continue building a complete, accessible, and current repository of information and statistics about Veterans. An accurate and timely

source of Veteran's data and statistics will better support this Committee in its deliberations. Reliable information will ensure that the VA speaks with one voice and assists planners and decision makers in developing and improving the organization and its programs. With timely, accurate, and accessible information we can plan for the delivery of improved support to Veterans.

My fourth priority will be to have an even stronger program evaluation capability, one that will evaluate how well VA's programs are meeting intended outcomes and how effectively they are providing for the current and future needs of Veterans. When deficiencies are encountered, we will ensure corrective action is taken in a timely manner.

Finally, if confirmed I will assist the senior leadership to identify and institutionalize the best management and business practices available to improve the quality of care and services for our Nation's Veterans. We will continue to promote the use of the Baldrige criteria for organizational assessment throughout the Department. We will support VA organizations and facilities as they plan and conduct benchmarking studies to identify and bring into this department the best practices available.

Based on my experience as a team player and team builder, if confirmed, I intend to assist Secretary Principi in building the most dedicated and capable VA team, which in turn, will be a strong partner with the Congress, the Administration, the Department of Defense, other Federal agencies, the Veteran Service Organizations, and the States Department of Veterans Affairs. The synergism from this strong team effort will enhance VA's service and support to Veterans.

In 1991, it was a privilege and an honor to have been selected to lead the team that assisted our Nation in thanking and honoring our WWII Veterans and their families, and those that served on the home front, as we commemorated the 50th anniversary of that war. This four and a half (4½) year journey impressed upon me, even more, what we owe these men and women. They not only saved this Nation, but literally saved the world. They came home, took off their uniforms, some went back to school on the GI Bill, and together they built this strong, free and beautiful America that we are privileged to live in every day.

It has been said, "That any Nation that forgets its' Veterans, soon ceases to be a great Nation." If confirmed, I will do my best to assist this Nation in demonstrating to our Veterans and their families that they will not be forgotten.

In closing, I would like to thank my wife of 47 years and my family for the great support that they have always provided in our journey of service to our nation.

Thank you, again, for the privilege and honor of appearing before you today.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES

PART I—ALL THE INFORMATION IN THIS PART WILL BE MADE PUBLIC

1. Name: Claude Milton Kicklighter, Sr.
2. Address: McLean, VA 22101.
3. Position: Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning, Department of Veterans Affairs.
4. Date of Nomination: 27 June 2001.
5. Date of birth: 22 August 1933.
6. Place of birth: Glennville, Georgia.
7. Marital status: Married—April, 1954.
8. Full name of spouse: Elizabeth Exley Kicklighter.
9. Names and ages of children: Elizabeth Jane Kicklighter Palmer—10/12/55; Claude Milton Kicklighter, Jr.—10/01/57; Richard Van Kicklighter—10/14/58.
10. Education: Institution (including city, state), dates attended, degrees received, dates of degrees:
 George Washington University, Washington, DC; 09/73–08/74; Masters of Arts Degree in Management of National Resources from the School of Business Administration; 08/74.
 Mercer University, Macon, GA; 01/53–06/55; Bachelor of Arts/Biology; 06/55.
 University of Georgia, Athens, GA; 09/52–12/52; N/A.
 Georgia Military College (Junior College), Millageville, GA; 09/51–06/52; N/A.
 Emory-At-Valdosta (Junior College), Valdosta, GA; 08/50–05/51; N/A.
 Glennville Georgia High School, Glennville, GA; 09/46–05/50; Diploma—High School Diploma; 05/50
11. Honors and awards: List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, military medals, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievement:

Distinguished Service Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters
 Defense Superior Service Medal
 Legion of Merit with three Oak Leaf Clusters
 Bronze Star Medal
 Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster
 Army Commendation Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters
 Secretary of Defense Identification Badge
 Joint Chiefs of Staff Identification Badge
 Army General Staff Identification Badge
 Order of Aaron and Hur, awarded by the Chaplin's Corp
 Argentina Order of May
 French Order National Du Merite
 Korean Order of National Security Gugseon Medal
 Silver Honorary Order of Freedom from the Republic of Slovenia
 Eisenhower Liberation Medal (presented by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council)
 The Presidential Citizen Medal, 1995
 The Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service, 1996
 Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service from the Secretary of the Army, 1998

Distinguished Civilian Service Award from the Department of Defense, 1999
 12. Memberships: List all memberships and offices held in professional, fraternal, business, scholarly, civic, charitable, and other organizations for the last 5 years and other prior memberships or offices you consider relevant:

Elected to the Board of Habitat for Humanity, International in February 1997. On 17 October 1998 was elected as Chair of the Board. This is a non-profit, faith-based organization that builds houses for the needy in 79 countries. I receive no compensation, except partial reimbursement for expenses.

Falls Church Episcopal Church, 1993 to present
 Enterprise Development International, summer 2000 to present
 Fort Shafter Officers' Club, 1989 to 1991
 Fort Myer Officer's Club, 1991 to present
 Association of the United States Army
 Veterans of Foreign Wars, Lifetime Membership
 American Legion, 1991–1995
 Disabled American Veterans, Lifetime Membership
 Serve on the Board of Directors of the International Foundation. A non-profit, faith-based organization. July 1995 to present
 Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, June 2001 to present

13. Employment Record: List all employment (except military service) since your twenty-first birthday, including the title or description of job, name of employer, location of work, and inclusive dates of employment:

(a) Worked as a clerk in my father's grocery store in the summers while I was attending college. My father also had a farm and I spent part of my time working as a farmer on the farm. The store was named The Bargain Corner, located in Glennville, Georgia. Work there each summer from 1950–1955. I was working for my father until I was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant, Field Artillery, U.S. Army, 18 October 1955, and entered active duty in the Regular Army.

(b) Retired from active duty 31 August 1991, after 35 years, 10 months of continuous active service. Became a Department of the Army civil servant on 1 September 1991, as the Director of the Department of Defense committee to assist our Nation in thanking and honoring the WWII Veterans and their families, and especially the families that lost loved ones in the war, as our Nation commemorated the 50th Anniversary of WWII. Employers: Department of the Army. September 1991 to July 1996.

(c) In July 1996 became the Deputy Under Secretary of the Army for International Affairs. Employer: Department of the Army. July 1996 to July 1999.

(d) July 1999 became Chief of Staff of Value America, Inc., Charlottesville, VA, an E-Commerce company. July 1999 to March 2000.

(e) April 2000 became Deputy Under Secretary of Memorial Affairs, National Cemetery Administration at the Department of Veterans Affairs. April 2000 to October 2000.

(f) In October 2000 the office was transferred to the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs. In January 2001 I was put in charge of the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs until a new Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs was sworn in on 31 May 2001. October 2000 to June 2001.

14. Military Service: List all military service (including reserve components and National Guard or Air National Guard), with inclusive dates of service, rank, per-

manent duty stations and units of assignment, titles, descriptions of assignments, and type of discharge:

(a) While a student at Mercer University, Macon, Georgia, I joined a U.S. Army Reserve (February, 1954) and attended monthly drills at an Army Reserve unit in Macon, Georgia. As a result of my ROTC training, I was promoted to the rank of Corporal (E-4) when I enlisted. The following year, I was promoted to Sergeant (E-5). I continued to attend drills until I graduated from college and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army Reserve in June 1955, and at that time, I was discharged from the U.S. Army Reserve in my enlisted status, and was provided an Honorable Discharge.

(b) 18 October 1955 I was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Regular Army and called to active duty where I served continuously for 35 years and almost eleven months. Was retired with an Honorable Discharge on 31 August 1991. My official Resume as provided by the Office of General Officer Management, Department of the Army, Pentagon 6 June 2001, follows and provides the assignments, schools, promotions and medals I was awarded during my military career.

15. Government experience: List any advisory, consultative, honorary, or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments other than listed above:

When I left Federal service in July 1999, I was asked to be a consultant with the Department of the Army, without compensation, and I accepted the position. I was never asked to perform any service. This appointment began in October 1999 and expired in October 2000.

16. Published writings: List titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports or other published materials you have written:

Wrote an article for Jane's Military describing NATO's Central European Pipeline operation in 1981. Received a check for \$200.00, which I returned to the publisher.

17. Political affiliations and activities

(a) List all memberships and offices held in and financial contributions and services rendered to any political party or election committee during the last 10 years:

I attended a dinner in honor of Senator John McCain in the Spring of 2000. I had known Senator McCain while he was on active duty, and a good friend hosted the dinner. I attended for personal reasons, not political. My wife and I both attended and contributed \$500.00 per dinner.

(b) List all elective public offices for which you have been a candidate and the month and year of each election involved: None.

18. Future employment relationships

(a) State whether you will sever all connections with your present employer, business firm, association, or organization if you are confirmed by the Senate: N/A.

(b) State whether you have any plans after completing Government service to resume employment, affiliation, or practice with your previous employer, business firm, association or organization: N/A.

(c) What commitments, if any, have been made to you for employment after you leave Federal service? N/A.

(d) (If appointed for a term of specified duration) Do you intend to serve the full term for which you have been appointed? Yes.

(e) (If appointed for indefinite period) Do you intend to serve until the next Presidential election? Yes.

19. Potential Conflicts of Interest

(a) Describe any financial arrangements, deferred compensation agreements, or other continuing financial, business, or professional dealings which you have with business associates, clients, or customers who will be affected by policies which you will influence in the position to which you have been nominated: None.

(b) List any investments, obligations, liabilities, or other financial relationships which constitute potential conflicts of interest with the position to which you have been nominated: None.

(c) Describe any business relationship, dealing, or financial transaction which you have had during the last 5 years, whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that constitutes as potential conflict of interest with the position to which you have been nominated: See Ethics Agreement.

(d) Describe any lobbying activity during the past 10 years in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any Federal legislation or for the purpose of affecting the administration and execution of Federal law or policy: None.

(e) Explain how you will resolve any potential conflicts of interest that may be disclosed by your responses to the above items. (Please provide a copy of any trust or other agreements involved.) See Ethics Agreement.

20. Testifying before the Congress

(a) Do you agree to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress upon the request of such committee? Yes.

(b) Do you agree to provide such information as is requested by such a committee? Yes.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Thank you very much for the very proud and fine statements, sir.

Dr. Gauss?

STATEMENT OF JOHN A. GAUSS, PH.D, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY, AND CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. GAUSS. Chairman Rockefeller, Senator Specter, members of the committee, it is indeed an honor to appear before you today as President Bush's nominee for Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology and Chief Information Officer of the Department of Veterans Affairs. I would like to thank President Bush for nominating me, Secretary Principi for requesting my nomination, and the committee for such expeditious scheduling of this hearing.

Secretary Principi is a man of vision for our Nation's veterans, and I look forward to helping him achieve his vision if confirmed. During his testimony in front of Congress in January of 2001, the Secretary noted that information technology offers a means to break down bureaucratic barriers that interfere with quick and effective service. That same technology offers opportunities for breaking down walls between various elements of government. It also offers the opportunity to eliminate barriers within the VA itself.

Today, VA has several obstacles to overcome to achieve the Secretary's vision in the area of information security, fragmented networks, integrating them into one VA-wide network, one VA registration for our veterans, and there are troubled ongoing programs within the department. I believe that I am qualified to help the Secretary break down those barriers and overcome those obstacles. Having recently retired from 32 years of active duty in the Navy, I have been dedicated to the defense of our Nation and to serving our men and women in uniform. It would be a high honor and distinct privilege to continue serving those same men and women in their military afterlife.

While on active duty, I was responsible for providing sailors, soldiers, airmen and Marines with the best possible information technology to enable them to accomplish any assigned combat mission. Information technology proved to be a force multiplier by substantially reducing the decision cycle time for those in command, thereby creating a more effective combat force. If confirmed, I stand committed to you, the Secretary, and the President that I will approach the information technology problems at VA with the same dedication as when I was serving on active duty, and I commit to make information technology that same force multiplier, but in providing effective and prompt service for our veterans.

I do not have a tactical plan here today. However, from a strategic point of view, there are five areas I plan to attack immediately if confirmed: First, complete the enterprise architecture road map for the future. Where should the VA be headed in this century? Two, integrate the disparate wide-area telecommuni-

cations networks to improve overall performance and responsiveness for our veterans. Third, implement a strong information security infrastructure to protect the privacy of our veterans and the financial information of the agency, which, Mr. Chairman, you mentioned in your opening remarks. Four, create a program management oversight process to help the information technology program managers deliver their products such that they meet requirements, are delivered on time, and come in on budget. Fifth, establish information technology metrics to continually measure our ability to meet our veterans' needs. Finally, I recognize the importance of the critical oversight role of both this committee and the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Both committees have provided leadership and support to VA and to veterans programs. You have my commitment to work with you to achieve the goal of serving our veterans in a timely and effective manner. In closing, it is truly an honor for me to be here today. I stand ready to serve and look forward to any questions you may have.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement and biographical information of Mr. Gauss follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN A. GAUSS, PH.D, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY, AND CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Chairman Rockefeller, Senator Specter, and members of the Committee, it is indeed an honor to appear before you today as President Bush's nominee for Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology, and Chief Information Officer of the Department of Veterans Affairs. I would like to thank President Bush for nominating me to serve in this position; Secretary Principi for requesting my nomination; and, the Committee for such expeditious scheduling of this hearing. Secretary Principi is a man of vision for our nation's Veterans, and I look forward to helping him achieve his vision, if confirmed.

In his testimony before Congress on 18 January 2001, Secretary Principi stated, and I quote, "Information technology can offer a means to break down the bureaucratic barriers that interfere with quick and efficient service to veterans as well as the walls dividing VA from her sister departments in the Federal government and, totally unacceptably to me, barriers within VA itself." Today, VA has several obstacles to overcome in order to achieve the Secretary's vision in the areas of information security, fragmented networks, one VA registration, and troubled ongoing programs such as VETSNET.

I believe that I am qualified to help the Secretary break down those barriers and overcome those obstacles. Having recently retired from 32 years of active duty in the United States Navy, I have been dedicated to the defense of our nation and serving our men and women in uniform. It would be a high honor and distinct privilege to continue serving those same men and women in their military afterlife. While on active duty, I was responsible for providing our sailors, soldiers, airmen, and marines with the best possible information technology to enable them to accomplish any assigned combat mission. Information technology proved to be a force multiplier by substantially reducing the decision cycle time for those in command, creating a more effective combat force. If confirmed, I stand committed to you, the Secretary, and the President that I will approach the information technology problems at VA with the same dedication as when I was on active duty, and make information technology a "force multiplier" in providing effective prompt service to our Veterans.

I do not have a tactical "battle plan" today; however, from a strategic perspective, there are five areas I plan to attack immediately:

- (1) Complete the Enterprise Architecture road map to the future;
- (2) Integrate disparate telecommunications networks to improve performance and responsiveness for our Veterans;
- (3) Implement a strong information security infrastructure to protect the privacy of our Veterans;

(4) Create a program/project management process to oversee and help the VA information technology program/project managers deliver products that meet requirements, are delivered on time, and stay within budget; and,

(5) Establish information technology metrics to continuously measure our ability to meet our Veterans' needs.

Finally, I recognize the importance of the critical oversight role of both this committee and the House Veterans Affairs Committee. Both committees have provided leadership and support to VA and to Veterans' programs. You have my commitment to work with you to achieve the goal of serving our Veterans in a timely and effective manner.

In closing, it is truly an honor for me to be here today. I stand ready to serve and look forward to any questions you may have. Thank you very much.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES

PART I—ALL THE INFORMATION IN THIS PART WILL BE MADE PUBLIC

1. Name: John A. Gauss.
2. Address: Arlington, Va. 22207.
3. Position: Assistant Secretary (Information and Technology) for the Department of Veterans Affairs.
4. Date of Nomination: 17 July 2001.
5. Date of birth: 28 September 1947.
6. Place of birth: Salem, Mass
7. Marital status: Married.
8. Names and ages of children: Stepson: Clark Crawford, Age 32; Stepdaughter: Beverly Crawford, Age 34.
9. Education: Institution (including city, state), dates attended, degrees received, dates of degrees:
 Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; 09/65–06/69; BS (Engineering Physics); 06/69
 Naval Post Graduate School, Monterey, CA; 09/76–03/80; MSEE, Ph.D. (EE); 03/80
10. Honors and awards: List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, military medals, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievement:
 United States Navy; NROTC Scholarship; 1965
 Department of Defense; Defense Distinguished Service Medal; 07/97
 Department of the Navy; Distinguished Service Medal; 05/01
 Department of the Navy; Legion of Merit; 07/94
 Department of the Navy; Legion of Merit; 10/92
 Department of the Navy; Legion of Merit; 08/89
 Department of the Navy; Meritorious Service Medal; 08/91
 Department of the Navy; Navy Achievement Medal; 09/82
 Department of the Navy; National Defense Service Medal; 09/90
 Department of the Navy; National Defense Service Medal; 07/69
 Department of Defense; Joint Meritorious Unit Award; 12/96
 Department of the Navy; Vietnam Service Medal; 11/72
11. Memberships: List all memberships and offices held in professional, fraternal, business, scholarly, civic, charitable, and other organizations for the last 5 years and other prior memberships or offices you consider relevant:
 Lifetime member of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA)
 Member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)
12. Employment Record: List all employment (except military service) since your twenty-first birthday, including the title or description of job, name of employer, location of work, and inclusive dates of employment:
 Consultant to the Department of Veterans Affairs: July 2001.
13. Military Service: List all military service (including reserve components and National Guard or Air National Guard), with inclusive dates of service, rank, permanent duty stations and units of assignment, titles, descriptions of assignments, and type of discharge: On 01 July 1969, I was commissioned as an Ensign in the United States Navy and retired as a Rear Admiral (Upper Half) on 30 June 2001. Assignments included Division Officer and Department Head on USS Patterson (FF-1051); Operations Officer on USS Flint (AE-32); Executive Officer and Navigator on USS Conserver (ARS-39); Air ASW Project Officer at the Naval Surface Warfare Center, White Oak Md; Surface Ship Chief Engineer for the TOMAHAWK Weapons System at the Cruise Missiles Project Office; Program Manager for Navy

Command and Control Systems Afloat at the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command; Program Director for Navy Command Systems at the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command; Commander of the Joint Interoperability and Engineering Organization, and Deputy Director for Engineering at the Defense Information Systems Agency; Director of Allied Interoperability and Fleet Requirements in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations; and, Commander of the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command until retirement. See attached DD-214.

14. Government experience: List any advisory, consultative, honorary, or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments other than listed above: None.

15. Published writings: List titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports or other published materials you have written:

Aligned for the Future, Sea Power Magazine, March 2001 edition.

16. Political affiliations and activities

(a) List all memberships and offices held in and financial contributions and services rendered to any political party or election committee during the last 10 years: None.

(b) List all elective public offices for which you have been a candidate and the month and year of each election involved: None.

17. Future employment relationships

(a) State whether you will sever all connections with your present employer, business firm, association, or organization if you are confirmed by the Senate: N/A.

(b) State whether you have any plans after completing Government service to resume employment, affiliation, or practice with your previous employer, business firm, association or organization:

I intend to remain as a member of AFCEA and IEEE.

(c) What commitments, if any, have been made to you for employment after you leave Federal service? None.

(d) (If appointed for a term of specified duration) Do you intend to serve the full term for which you have been appointed? N/A.

(e) (If appointed for indefinite period) Do you intend to serve until the next Presidential election? Yes.

18. Potential Conflicts of Interest

(a) Describe any financial arrangements, deferred compensation agreements, or other continuing financial, business, or professional dealings which you have with business associates, clients, or customers who will be affected by policies which you will influence in the position to which you have been nominated:

See Part II, paragraphs 7 & 8.

(b) List any investments, obligations, liabilities, or other financial relationships which constitute potential conflicts of interest with the position to which you have been nominated:

See Part II, paragraphs 7 & 8. Also, see attached Ethics Agreement.

(c) Describe any business relationship, dealing, or financial transaction which you have had during the last 5 years, whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that constitutes as potential conflict of interest with the position to which you have been nominated: None.

(d) Describe any lobbying activity during the past 10 years in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any Federal legislation or for the purpose of affecting the administration and execution of Federal law or policy: None.

(e) Explain how you will resolve any potential conflicts of interest that may be disclosed by your responses to the above items. (Please provide a copy of any trust or other agreements involved.)

See attached Ethics Agreement.

19. Testifying before the Congress

(a) Do you agree to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress upon the request of such committee? Yes.

(b) Do you agree to provide such information as is requested by such a committee? Yes.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BEN NIGHTHORSE CAMPBELL
TO JOHN A. GAUSS

Question 1. The 2001 VA Performance Plan Means and Strategies states that it is working on developing a strategy to improve timely access to patient information and records by speeding up development of the Government Computer-based Pa-

tient Records (GCPR) program. As I understand, this is an interagency program designed to share military DoD, VA and Indian Health Service Records.

Are you familiar with the program? If not, could you look into it and report back to me on what plans you might have to implement and utilize the program? And, as Assistant Secretary would you be committed to working toward DoD-VA information sharing initiatives?

Answer. I am familiar with the GCPR program. Ideally, the GCPR program would be able to exchange patient information between DoD, VA and Indian Health Service (IHS) medical systems in such a manner that a physician would have a single medical record to examine. Unfortunately, there are different data definitions used by each system. Further, due to the nature of the current DoD Composite Health Care System (CHCS I), two-way transmission is not possible at this time.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has developed a capability whereby a physician can access patient records from any VA Hospital. For the near term, GCPR is designed to accept a daily, one-way transmission of DoD patient data. GCPR can then be connected to the VHA medical systems and present patient data as if it were just another VA Hospital, except the data will be presented in a DoD format. In the mid-term, when the DoD next generation medical system (CHCS II) comes on line, we will work with DoD to make this type of data exchange two-way. As an adjunct to the DoD-VA mid term efforts, we will pursue the mid term solution with IHS beginning in FY02.

For the long term, we need to standardize our medical data definitions across government health care systems to enable the ultimate goal of an integrated patient record to be achieved. VHA has been working closely with the IHS to ensure that IHS can capitalize on advancements made between DoD and VA medical system data exchange.

The near term phase of GCPR is in the final stages of development. Once the capabilities of the near term GCPR are proven, VA will deploy GCPR to obtain the near term benefits discussed above. As we prove this capability, and as CHCS II deploys, we will develop a detailed plan to achieve the mid term solution with IHS participating as a full partner.

As the VA Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology, I am committed to working with all government agencies to define and share information that will enhance the operation of all interested parties. Examples of the type of mutually beneficial data sharing I will pursue are listed below.

1. Improved data transfer from DoD to the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) through automated transfer of medical record information at the time of a service member's separation or discharge to expedite determining medical and disability benefits eligibility.

2. Improved data transfer from DoD to VBA through enhanced automated transfer of personnel and payroll data to improve servicing GI loans and insurance conversions. This can be accomplished through effectively implementing electronic interfaces from the Defense Integrated Military Human Resource System (DIMHRS) and Defense Personnel Records Imaging System (DPRIS) to appropriate VA's benefits systems.

3. Shared ordering of pharmaceuticals and medical/surgical supplies through information technology solutions may enable DoD and VA to improve service to both active duty members and veterans, and could potentially save money for both Departments.

4. Improved data standardization efforts between DoD and VA could offer further opportunities to improve service and reduce cost.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TIM HUTCHINSON TO JOHN A. GAUSS

Question 1. A strong relationship between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs is critical in ensuring that our veterans receive the care and service that they deserve. Do you believe that it is important that the DoD and VA continue to build on efforts to share resources and solutions?

Answer. I believe it is essential that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) find ways to provide the best possible service to our military men and women, both while on active duty and following their service to our country. This would include sharing resources and solutions where it made sense to do so. There are several examples where VA and DoD could make significant improvements in service to our active duty members and our veterans. They include:

1. Improved data transfer from DoD to the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) through automated transfer of medical record information at the time of a service member's separation or discharge to expedite determining medical and disability benefits eligibility.

2. Improved data transfer from DoD to VBA through enhanced automated transfer of personnel and payroll data to improve servicing GI loans and insurance conversions. This can be accomplished through effectively implementing electronic interfaces from the Defense Integrated Military Human Resource System (DIMHRS) and Defense Personnel Records Imaging System (DPRIS) to appropriate VA's benefits systems.

3. Improved data sharing of medical records will greatly enhance clinical care to our veterans. This type of data sharing could facilitate workload balancing between DoD and VA hospitals that are geographically collocated and thereby provide better medical service to both active duty members and veterans.

4. Shared ordering of pharmaceuticals and medical/surgical supplies through information technology solutions may enable DoD and VA to improve service to both active duty members and veterans, and could potentially save money for both Departments.

5. Improved data standardization efforts between DoD and VA could offer further opportunities to improve service and reduce cost.

Question 2. The Government Computer-based Patient Record Initiative (GCPR) is aimed at improving interoperability between the information systems of the VA and DoD. Can you comment on the recent GAO report criticizing the DoD and VA for mismanagement of the GCPR program?

Answer. GCPR started as an initiative to implement direction contained in Presidential Review Directive 5. Ideally, the GCPR program would be able to exchange patient information between DoD, VA and Indian Health Service (IHS) medical systems in such a manner that a physician would have a single medical record to examine. Unfortunately, the detailed technical requirements for achieving this vision were never formally established. In addition, the Program Manager for GCPR was not empowered by all sponsoring activities involved with GCPR to make the necessary program management decisions.

In my opinion, the process for overseeing programs in their execution phase needs improvement across all VA Information Technology programs. In my opening statement at my confirmation hearing, I discussed five near term strategies that I would pursue, if confirmed.

1. Complete the Enterprise Architecture road map to the future;
2. Integrate disparate telecommunications networks to improve performance and responsiveness for our veterans;
3. Implement a strong information security infrastructure to protect the privacy of our veterans;
4. Create a program/project management process to oversee and help the VA information technology program/project managers deliver products that meet requirements, are delivered on time, and stay within budget; and,
5. Establish information technology metrics to continuously measure our ability to meet our veterans' needs.

Four of these five strategies apply to GCPR and are in the process of being implemented. Specifically, the GCPR program manager is required to re-baseline the program to address a near term, mid term and long term solution to the patient record problem. This rebaselining will be approved by me and must occur prior to the expenditure of FY2002 funding. Once rebaselined, I will conduct periodic in-process reviews to ensure that cost, schedule and performance requirements are maintained.

Unfortunately, there are different data definitions used by the DoD, VA and IHS medical systems. Further, due to the nature of the current DoD Composite Health Care System (CHCS I), two-way transmission is not possible at this time. In view of these facts, the strategy for rebaselining is to evolve GCPR as follows. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has developed a capability whereby a physician can access patient records from any VA Hospital. For the near term, GCPR is designed to accept a daily, one-way transmission of DoD patient data. GCPR can then be connected to the VHA medical systems and present patient data as if it were just another VA Hospital, except the data will be presented in a DoD format.

In the mid-term, when the DoD next generation medical system (CHCS II) comes on line, we will work with DoD to make this type of data exchange two-way. As an adjunct to the DoD-VA mid term efforts, we will pursue the mid term solution with IHS beginning in FY02.

For the long term, we need to standardize our medical data definitions across government health care systems to enable the ultimate goal of an integrated patient record to be achieved.

The near term phase of GCPR is in the final stages of development. Once the capabilities of the near term GCPR are proven, VA will deploy GCPR to obtain the near term benefits discussed above.

I believe the actions we are taking with the oversight of GCPR are prudent and will lead to achieving the intended results.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Thank you, Dr. Gauss and Mr. Kicklighter. I want to ask you a question that is hard to answer, probably impossible to answer, but which will help me understand you both better. We have been through a tax cut that will last 10 years. Spending on all fronts is going to be a terrible worry. I worry about the VA and what money will be out there 2 or 3 or 5 years from now. You are policy and planning, and you are technology IT. When a policy planner sits down to take a plan and refine it, you are working within the world of what you want to have happen. There is no other way you can do it, and you complete that plan to the best of your ability, and it is a substantial move forward. So that is part one.

Part two, the VA is the second largest agency in the Federal Government, and there are a lot of people, many of them at fairly high levels, who have been there for a very long time, who say:

Oh, you know, Claude Kicklighter is here and he has got a very high position, but he is going to be here for a number of years, and I will be here after he goes.

And that brings in, in talking to both of you, the immutable question of how does a new person coming into office—not new, either of you, in your fields or this work, but new in your positions—when you run up against the resistance of people who, one, because they are human beings, resist change even though they might know change is for the better.

Second, the whole question in a large bureaucracy of what gets decided, approved, at the top, to getting it to filter down—the example I always use and then I will stop my question, it is already long—is there is something in health care which administers Medicaid and Medicare called HCFA, the Health Care Financing Administration. Congress has set up a brilliant system wherein, when a new person goes in to head those 4,000 consummate bureaucratic detail experts, that we only allow them to take five people with them, which is like saying to him or her, “You cannot get the job done, because you will not be able to take what you want to do and enforce it down through the bureaucracy.” Now, that is a little different situation. You are not under a stricture, but you are under a much—4,000 to 200,000-plus people is a big difference.

So my question is how do you programmatically, psychologically, in terms of your personality, in terms of your determination that you now have to change things and make them better and work better for veterans—you both expressed that very clearly and eloquently—what do you do when you come up against the inevitability of that? How do you handle it?

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. Let me try to answer that, Mr. Chairman. One thing is clear, in policy and planning, I have met some very capable people, including senior leadership and other employees. Certainly I would not try to operate without taking full advantage of the great talent that is there. But the main challenge would be always to take a look and see what is the support, whether it be health care benefits or cemeteries, what is the health care that you want

to provide to the veterans in Hometown America, and then try to develop the programs that will provide that needed support. And it has to be work between both the planners, the policy people, and the financial management folks, and all the administrations. In the case of health care, it would be working with the health care administration. But as a team, to analyze and to see, within the constraints of what resources are available, what is the best possible support that you can provide to the veteran or VA employees in the field? Now, there may be some tough calls that the senior leadership has to make, and it may be some tough calls that must come back to the Congress. Our job would be to try to focus on providing the best support possible to the greatest needs of our veterans and their families. That requires a lot of team effort—building the team—analyzing and making sure that you have good data. You know that the results that you have planned for the veterans, and you must analyze, to ensure you are achieving the kind of results you intended, and you do this by checking, consulting with our board of directors, staffers here in the Congress, with veterans service organizations, with the States. We need to get as much input as we can as rapidly as we can to ensure we are building the best program possible to support the veterans. There maybe restraints that might not give the veterans everything you intended.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. My time has expired and I am going to followup on that question with Dr. Gauss and also with you on my second round of questions.

Senator SPECTER?

Senator SPECTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Gauss, as Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology, how would your service in the United States Navy be of assistance?

Mr. GAUSS. Senator, for the past 21 years, I was an engineering duty officer, managing acquisition of weapons system and information technology systems, working in the predominantly civil service environment. My last job was command of a Navy 400-person organization; 300 were military, over 8,000 were civil servants. So I have a lot of experience in the technology domain and in management of our senior civil servants and junior civil servants over the past 21 years, and I believe that is directly translatable to this job, should I be confirmed.

Senator SPECTER. Well, when we talk about technology, we are talking about the application of the rapidly moving mechanisms for bringing the information age to bear. Would you characterize your background with the Navy as putting you on top of these issues?

Mr. GAUSS. Yes, sir, I would.

Senator SPECTER. I note you have a Ph.D. in electrical engineering. To what extent is that a qualification, in your judgment, to being Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology?

Mr. GAUSS. Sir, because the technology is moving as fast as you noted, it is important to have a full understanding of what the risks are for making decisions on which technology to choose and how you manage that for moving into the future. So that educational background, coupled with experience background, helps in making those types of risk management decisions.

Senator SPECTER. Mr. Kicklighter, as a lieutenant general in the Army, a similar question: how would that experience be applicable

to the duties and responsibilities of Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning?

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. Well, sir, most of my military career has been formulating policy and doing planning, and producing results from the policy development and the planning. I feel like that kind of experience very adequately prepares me for this job.

Senator SPECTER. I note, Mr. Kicklighter—we call you Mister now, instead of General, and Dr. Gauss, we call you Doctor now, instead of Admiral—I note the presence of “sir” as you talk. I do not think that deference is necessary for just mere Senators. My chief of staff is a West Point grad. I have quite a number of West Point and Annapolis grads in my organization. Do you think the Secretary is overdoing it a little in bringing two top-notch secretaries in like you, Mr. Kicklighter, and Dr. Gauss, with military backgrounds?

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. No, sir, I do not.

Senator SPECTER. That is not a trick question. [Laughter.]

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. As you may recall in my opening remarks, I think probably some of the most formidable and challenging and rewarding time of my career is the four-and-a-half years I spent in helping our Nation thank and honor our World War II veterans. I got to know very personal and up close that great generation. It had a tremendous impact on me and my respect for veterans, and I feel that dedication and affection that I bring to this job from that 4½ years.

Senator SPECTER. How about being Chairman of the Board of Habitat for Humanity? Does that give you some special insights?

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. Well, as you know, it is a faith-based ministry that is trying to eliminate poverty housing, and we certainly want to eliminate poverty housing for our veterans and any other American.

Senator SPECTER. Dr. Gauss, do you think that this heavy emphasis on military background is sort of counter-balanced by one man from the Army and one man from the Navy?

Mr. GAUSS. Yes, sir. [Laughter.]

Senator SPECTER. Dr. Gauss, a simple yes would have been sufficient. [Laughter.]

You men have outstanding records. I think Secretary Principi is lucky to have you. I know Chairman Rockefeller and the rest of us want to get you on the job. That is why Senator Rockefeller has expedited this hearing—whoops. My red light went on. I will stop right there. Thank you.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Senator Nelson?

Senator NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Kicklighter, you mentioned that your second priority in your written testimony, if confirmed, would be to analyze existing policies and recommend to the Secretary changes that would improve the delivery of health care benefits and services to the veterans, and you also indicated that you do not have a tactical approach necessarily, more strategic in nature.

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. Yes, sir.

Senator NELSON. And I wondered—so my question truly is tomorrow, when you speak to Secretary Principi, what are you going to talk about? What are you going to make in the way of rec-

ommendations to him as to how to develop a tactical approach to analyzing these existing policies and make the recommendations as it relates to efficiency and the delivery of health care?

Clearly, everybody in the veterans community continues to look for improvements in this area. Do you have anything in mind as to what you might ask tomorrow?

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. Senator, I have had good guidance from both the Secretary and the Deputy about what they expect me to do in this job, and I do not expect to go back to them tomorrow and tell them what I plan to do. But I do plan to get back to them very soon, and I would like to tell you that a procedure that they have put in place for managing policy development is something called the Strategic Management Council. The Council is chaired by the Deputy and is co-chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning and Assistant Secretary for Financial Management. It meets on a biweekly basis and it looks at the policy we have, looks at analyzing, making improvements, and developing existing and new initiatives.

I think that is going to serve us extremely well. It will move decisionmaking along very rapidly. It will give us feedback on policy that needs to be corrected, and I would tell the Secretary that I would like to see the procedure work. Decisions on policy, as you well know, Senator, rest with the Secretary. But this procedure will bring to the Secretary very quickly the kind of decisions that we need to make on policy, and if they need to come to Congress for policy decisions, they will be done.

Senator NELSON. As you mentioned, being interested both in being involved as a team player, but also a team builder, that a great deal of the Secretary's views may, in fact, be shaped by your recommendations or by this policy group.

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. Yes, sir. As you know, Senator, I have not performed in this job and, if confirmed, I eagerly await the opportunity to get into it and learn as much as I can very rapidly, and then become a very active player. But I want to make sure I have got a full deck of knowledge and the recommendations that I am making are sound and based on good analysis and recommendations from the staff there.

Senator NELSON. Thank you.

Dr. Gauss, privacy is one of the biggest issues, and you have already referenced the importance of having information technology at your fingertips. Have you thought of any ways—are you going to be directing your efforts toward protecting the privacy of veterans' health care records so that they somehow do not get viewed on the Internet? Obviously, everybody is worried about making sure that your personal records, personnel records—in this case, medical records—are maintained with strict privacy.

Mr. GAUSS. Yes, sir. It was one of the five areas that I mentioned that I would like to attack immediately, should I be confirmed. Protecting information with this technology is somewhat complex. It involves protecting your communications, your computers, your applications and your data. I would like to work with the rest of the staff at VA to propose to the Secretary a wide-reaching information assurance policy with some changes in how we build our technology.

Senator NELSON. So you have already had your chance to take at least a brief look, where you have made up your mind that there may be some areas where you can make some improvements?

Mr. GAUSS. Oh, yes, sir. Absolutely.

Senator NELSON. Very good. Thank you very much.

Thank you, both.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. Senator Nelson, is that it?

Senator NELSON. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. I want to point out that—and I do this delicately, having three formidable Senators looking at me rather carefully—that we, in fact, have a quorum and we can move to our bills, or we can do what any decent chairman would do, which would be to call on the three of you.

Senator MURRAY. That would be decent. [Laughter.]

Senator WELLSTONE. Do what comes easy to you. Do not be decent. [Laughter.]

Senator SPECTER. Mr. Chairman, I notice a waiver of rights. [Laughter.]

Senator WELLSTONE. But that is because we have two excellent people. We look forward to working with you.

Chairman ROCKEFELLER. All right. With that—and I will followup with post-hearing questions—I think all of us will followup; I certainly will, because I did not get all that I wanted, obviously, from my questions. Therefore, we will followup with questions regardless of what happens here, anyone who wants to, and I know you will reply promptly. But I will declare this part of the hearing at an end. We will now move to the second part of our agenda. So you can both be seated, and I thank you very, very much.

Mr. KICKLIGHTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GAUSS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Whereupon, at 3:20 p.m., the committee proceeded to other business.]

A P P E N D I X

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BEN NIGHTHORSE CAMPBELL, U.S. SENATOR FROM
COLORADO

Mr. President, thank you for holding this hearing on the nominations of Mick Kicklighter and John Gauss.

Mr. Kicklighter, I understand you come highly recommended by Senator Thurmond for the position of Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning. That is a good recommendation.

And, Mr. Gauss, your experience in communications, computers and intelligence systems for the Navy makes you highly qualified to be Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology.

Secretary Principi's commitment to our veterans has been encouraging. His own appointment is a powerful sign that our Department of Veterans Affairs is being run by someone who truly has the welfare of our veterans at heart. Now, I believe it is important that we move ahead with these nominations and give Secretary Principi some help in tackling the tough job ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

